28: Spiro--21 (1947-48)1949 Woleaians
827, 514, 177, 636 Ifalik

"The chiefs informed the people that they were to follow implicitly the recommendations made by the Military Government officers and the Navy doctors, about clearing the rubbish around their houses, and building over-water heads (1)."

"1. This is an example of navy unwarranted generalization. On Yap the natives defecate on the ground, with the result that Yap is plagued with diseases of all kinds. The Navy has encouraged the natives to build over-water heads to preclude the polluting of the ground, and thus preventing disease. When they arrived on Ifaluk, they assumed that the Ifaluk pattern was similar to Yap's, and suggested to the chiefs that over-water heads be erected. This suggestion, however, was entirely unnecessary since the Ifaluk natives almost invariably use the lagoon for their ablutions, abhoring the sight and smell of faeces."

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

FOREWORD

IFALUK is a small dot on the map: a half a square mile of land can hardly show much detail on any scale used for Pacific distances. Further, it is spelled "Ifalik" on most maps, through some accident in the history of official spelling for place names. The people who live there call their island in a way that might be rendered "Eefahlook" in a sort of English phonetic spelling. We figure that the people who live there ought to have the final say about the name of their island: hence our divergence from the map makers.

Ifaluk is one of the Caroline Islands, which form part of Micronesia. It is some 700 miles north of New Guinea, some 400 miles south of Guam, and about 1200 miles east of the Philippines. It is a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by the government of the United States.

Ifaluk is an atoll: a roughly circular reef, built by corals and other lime-secreting organisms, marking off a quiet lagoon in the open ocean, the reef in places piled up to form islets emerging a few feet above the level of the sea. Mr. E. H. Bryan, Jr., of the Bishop Museum, in Honolulu, has compiled a list of the islands of the world that could be classed as "atolls." He finds 409: 136 in Polynesia, 92 in Micronesia, 66 in Melanesia, 15 in Indonesia, 5 northwest of Australia, 68 in the rest of the Indian Ocean, 26 in the Caribbean Sea, and only one in the Atlantic. Atoll formation, then, is primarily a phenomenon of the tropical Pacific: and the word "atoll" carries with it the connotations of warm sun, of white beaches backed by graceful palms, of friendly dark-skinned people, and of an idyllic way of life.

Ifaluk, for us, lived up to these connotations, and we found our life there a continuously rewarding experience: an experience which, in writing this book, we are trying to share.

We tested several ways of meeting the problem of joint authorship. We tried being "we" which had a nice regal sound and worked well enough when we agreed. But we have a great talent for disagreeing,